



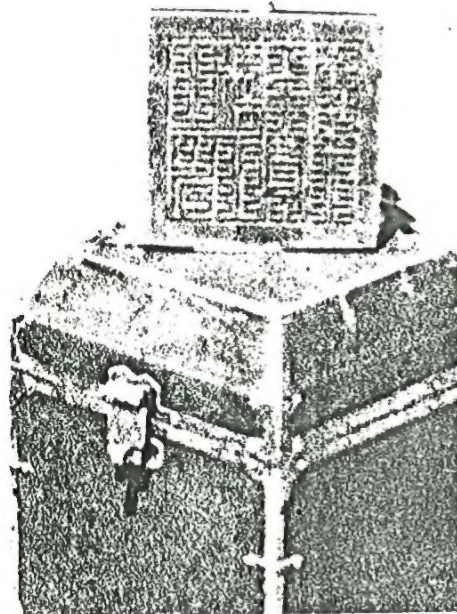
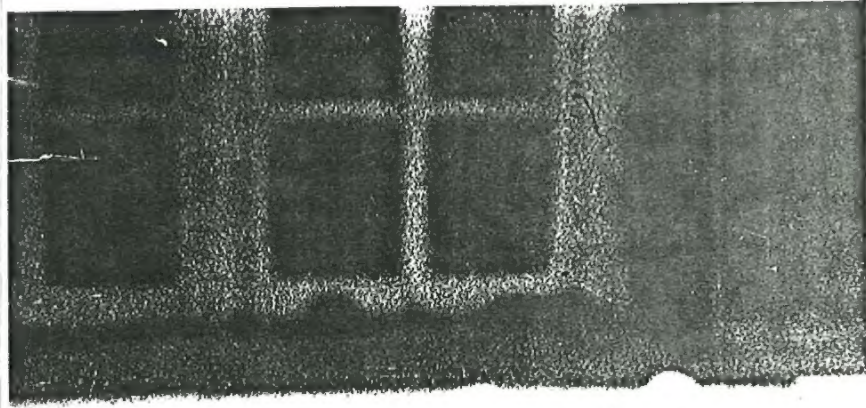
A DESCRIPTION OF SOME TIBETAN SEALS.

Compiled and translated by D.Dawson.

SOME TIBETAN SEALS ILLUSTRATED  
AND DESCRIBED

DERRICK DAWSON.

4/6 Seals from Derrick 6/7/10-



KARMAPA'S SEAL

Said to have been given to him by Kublai Khan  
(1260-1294)

Photo courtesy of Hugh Richardson.





A gold seal given to the XI Dalai Lama, Khedrup Gyatso, c. 1850 by the Ch'ing Emperor Hsien Feng.

## INTRODUCTION

"And he wrote in the King Ahasuerus'\* name and sealed it with the King's ring and sent letters by post on horseback....."

Book of Esther ch. 8, v.10

\*(Better known as Xerxes I, King of Persia.)

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This must be one of the earliest glimpses of pre-stamp postal history, c. 486-465 B.C. Collectors of postal history are familiar with seal letters. This small work is, however, particularly concerned with a study of Tibetan seals. Collectors of the postal history of Tibet have long prized documents bearing the seals of Dalai Lamas, Panchen Lamas, Regents, Prime Ministers, to mention but a few, and the inclusion of one or more specimens in a collection adds a rather special dimension which is not confined to the rarity of the pieces. A few seals have been illustrated in various publications over the years, some with greater clarity than others, but only a minority seem to have been translated. It has seemed desirable to attempt a more systematic collation which would also seek to explain the composition and meaning of each seal. This small book, of whose limitations I am all too painfully aware, attempts to do this.

To start with the most obvious comment, Tibetan seals may be impressed in ink or wax. Ink seals are generally, though not invariably, used as "inner seals" on letters or documents; wax seals are almost always seen as outer seals. Red seals are the prerogative of the clergy, an exception being the seal of the Si-lön or Prime Minister in his official capacity. Laymen invariably used black seals..

The composition of the seals varies considerably. The maze-like impression of the Dalai Lama's seals is in fact his title in the Tibetan language but written in Horyig, a Mongolian script. This adds somewhat to the complication of translating into an English text. The problem becomes more complex in the examples of the seals of the Regents and Prime Ministers where the lengthy 7 column Horyig inscriptions are replete with honorifics. The English must necessarily be a free translation. In the examples shown the Horyig design is illustrated followed by the equivalent Tibetan script and then by the Romanised Tibetan. A free translation follows.



On the other hand the seals of the Panchen Lama are inscribed in Lantsa, an Indian script based on the Devanagari alphabet. Yet other seals are symbolic based on floral or geometric patterns or on letters of the Tibetan or Horyig alphabets used as a sort of shorthand. Examples are the red banknote seals and the red ink seal of the Monk Dzongpön of Lhüntze Dzong.

Because of the less than perfect impressions found of some of the seals it has been necessary either to make drawings or to complete or correct them for illustrative purposes. The Dāh-Se-Gah-ni seals of the three large Lhasa foundations of Drepung, Sera and Ganden are particularly mentioned in this respect.

Many of the seals shown are from my own or other collections; others are based on descriptions and illustrations from other sources corrected occasionally where necessary. For example any slight overinking often results in distortion of characters which may give rise to a false translation. The aim throughout has been to render as accurate a representation as possible.

I am indebted to Hugh Richardson for the photograph of the Karmapa's seal, to Geoffrey Flack for illustrations of the seals of the Grand Secretary, the Sakya Lama, Trekhang Shapé and the ink seals of Tsarong and Tsipön Shakabpa, and to Nicholas Rhodes for the seal of the Lhasa Post Office and the splendid colour photograph of the seals and impressions of Dzasa Depön Sonam Laden La. He also provided much useful background information.

There are, of course, many more important Tibetan seals. This publication is mainly concerned with those likely to be met with by collectors of Tibetan Postal History. References to Tibetan seals can be found in much of the literature on Tibet, sale catalogues, etc. Particularly important for those wishing to study the subject in greater depth are articles by E.H. Walsh, A.H. Francke, and L.A. Waddell in various issues of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland between 1910 and 1915, and "Grundlagen Tibetischer Siegelkunde" by Dieter Schuh, published by VGH Wissenschaftsverlag Sankt Augustin, 1981.

## CONTENTS

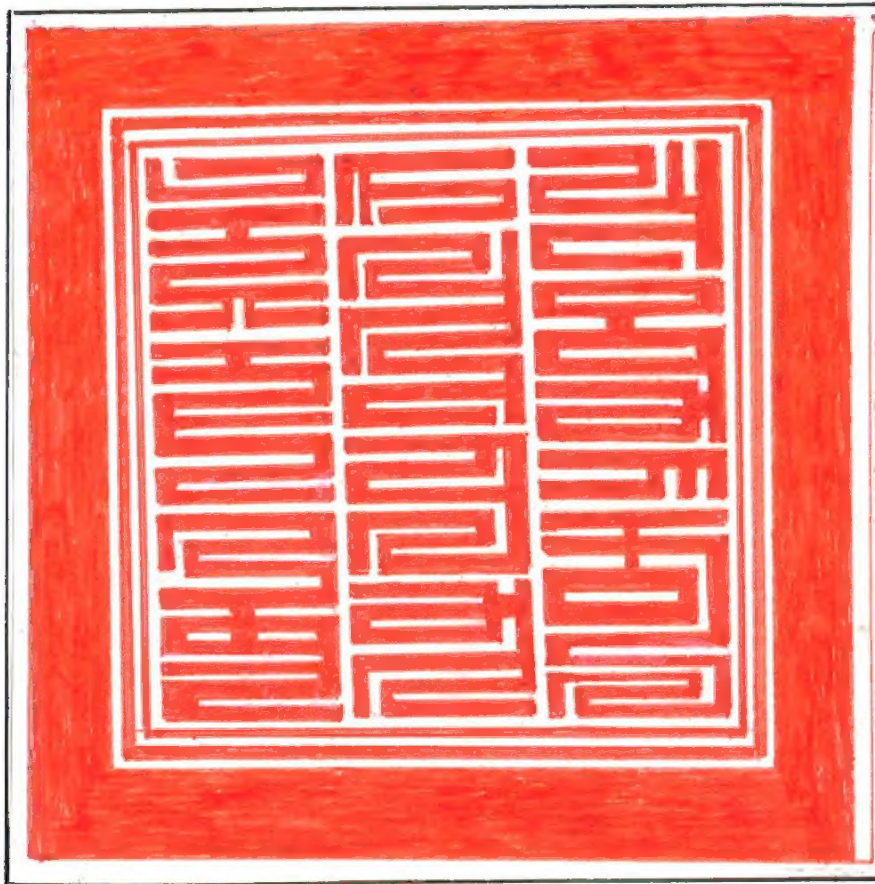
		Page
Seals of the Dalai Lama	Nos. I - 7	I
Seals of the Dalai Lama's administration	Nos 8 - 16	9
Seals of the Prime Minister of Tibet	Nos. 17- 19	17
Seals of the Tibetan Regents	Nos. 20- 22	21
Seals of the Panchen Lama & his Court	Nos. 23- 30	25
Seals of the Sakya Lama	Nos. 31- 33	31
Monastic seals	Nos. 34- 40	35
Administrative seals	Nos. 41- 49	39
Postal seals	Nos. 50- 54	45
Banknote seals	Nos. 55- 60	48
Seals of the Nobility	Nos. 61- 65	51
Miscellaneous seals	Nos. 66- 67	54
Appendix. The Horyig and Tibetan characters as found on some important seals and their Roman forms..		56
Index		57

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA.



THE GREAT SEAL OF TIBET, THE GOLDEN KING  
(gSer tham, "the Golden Seal")

Seal No. I



Size 111mm square, ~~the largest of all the Tibetan seals.~~

Description. Dates from 1578 when the then Mongol ruler Altan Khan was converted to Buddhism by Sonam Gyatso on whom he conferred the title Tale Lama, Ocean of Wisdom, and gave him this large gold seal. It was used by successive Dalai Lamas on important documents and impressions are known between 1642 and 1899 (5th to 13th Dalai Lamas). Used in red ink as Inmost Seal.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman		
		rdo rje 'chhang	ta la 'i bla ma	yi tham ka rgyal

The inscription translates as:-

"The Royal Seal of the Dalai Lama, Holder of the thunderbolt."





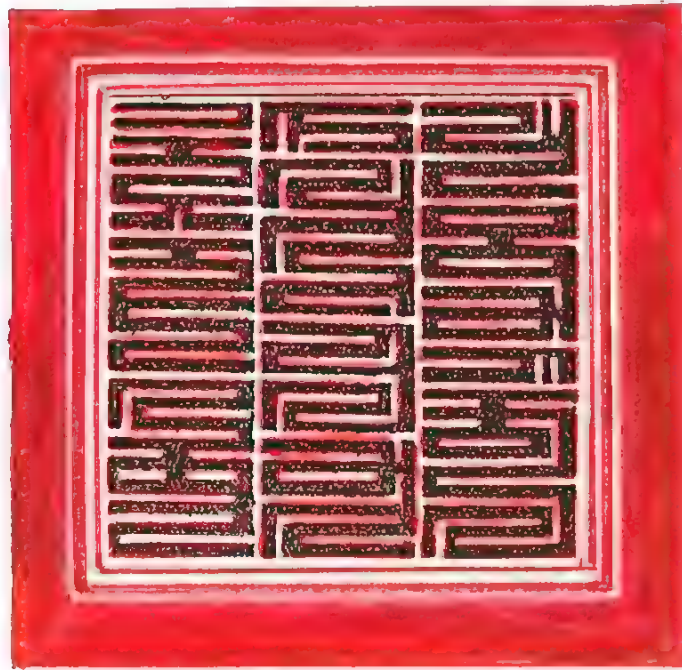
Size 137 mm x 142 mm

Description. The largest of all Tibetan seals seen to date, this red ink seal dates from 1909 and in all probability is the seal given to the XIII Dalai Lama by the Tibetan people on his ceremonial return to Lhasa from exile in Mongolia and China following the 1904 Younghusband Expedition. It was highly regarded as symbolising Tibetan independence. It was also used by the XIV Dalai Lama. The two outer columns are in Horyig script, the second in Lantsa and the third in Tibetan. The Tibetan script reads:-

Line 1	'phags pa'i yul
2	nas sangs rgyas kyi
3	bka lung rgyal
4	dbang 'jig rten
5	gsum mgon rten
6	kuns sten gi kun
7	khyab rgyal bstan
8	yongs la mnga dbang



AN EARLY OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE DALAI LAMA



Size 87 mm square.

Description. Red ink seal used as the Inmost Seal on official documents. Walsh reports it as having been used on a permit issued to Capuchin missionaries at Lhasa in 1741.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman												
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>rdo</td><td>ta</td><td>yi</td></tr> <tr> <td>nje</td><td>la</td><td>tham</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>'i</td><td>Ka</td></tr> <tr> <td>'chhang</td><td>ma</td><td>rgyal</td></tr> </table>	rdo	ta	yi	nje	la	tham		'i	Ka	'chhang	ma	rgyal
rdo	ta	yi												
nje	la	tham												
	'i	Ka												
'chhang	ma	rgyal												

The inscription reads:-  
"The Royal Seal of the Dalai Lama, Holder of the thunderbolt."



line 9      bsgyur ba thams chad  
           I0      mkhyen pa 'gyur med  
           II      rdo rje 'chhang rgya mchho'i  
           I2      bla ma lha mi yongs kyi  
           I3      spyi bos mchhod pa'i  
           I4      yid bzhin dbang gi  
           I5      rgyal po'i phyag rgya

Translation

" The Seal of the Great Sovereign who possesses the  
 wisdom of the Lord Buddha from the Glorious Land ,  
 the Lord of the Three Worlds, the Victorious Spreader  
 of the Doctrine, the All-Knowing who exists without  
 change, Holder of the Thunderbolt, the Supreme Teacher  
 anointed and honoured by men and gods."

OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE DALAI LAMA

Seal No. 2

Waterfall Type 3

Size 44mm x 44mm

Description. Red ink seal generally seen used as the innermost seal on the letters of the XIII and XIV Dalai Lamas. Inscribed in Horyig script.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman															
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>*</td><td>Bla</td><td>tham</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ta</td><td>ma</td><td>ka</td></tr> <tr> <td>la</td><td>'i</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>sta</td><td>gyal</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td>*</td></tr> </table>	*	Bla	tham	Ta	ma	ka	la	'i			sta	gyal			*
*	Bla	tham															
Ta	ma	ka															
la	'i																
	sta	gyal															
		*															

The inscription on the seal can thus be translated as :-

"The official royal seal of the Dalai Lama."

This was the seal of the XIII Dalai Lama but was also used by the XIV for a time.

\* The first and last characters in the Horyig are meaningless and are inserted merely to balance the seal.



SIZE 44mm x 42mm

Description. Red ink seal seen used as the Inmost Seal of the XIV Dalai Lama.

It differs from earlier Dalai Lama seals in that the script appears to be a mixture of the usual Horyig and some other as yet uncertain characters. The meaning is therefore still to be determined.

Waterfall makes passing reference to it.



THE SMALL PERSONAL SEAL OF THE DALAI LAMA

Seal No. 4



Size 24 mm  
(diameter)

Description. Red ink seal used as the Inmost Seal on personal correspondence.

The design is the endless knot, one of the eight auspicious signs of Buddhism, on which is superimposed a diamond shaped lozenge bearing the Tibetan sign  $\omega$  (the letter "A"), probably the initial letter of "Aum" in the Buddhist mantra, "Aum mani padme hum". This central design is surrounded by two solid concentric circles and an outer circle of pearls. The top margin bears the sun and moon indicating the upmost position of the seal. This personal seal is said to be the scarcest of all the Dalai Lama seals and to have been the original possession of Sanggye Gyatso, the Regent of Tibet following the death of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama in 1682.

Letters bearing this seal do not as a rule have an outer seal.



The XIII Dalai Lama

6  
SMALL SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA

Seal No. 5



Diameter 22mm

Description. Red ink seal with a snake-like design used as the outer seal on correspondence. Seen on letters of the XIII Dalai Lama.

Seal No. 6



Diameter 18mm

Description. Red ink seal with crossed thunderbolts design in use as an outer seal also by the XIII and earlier Dalai Lamas.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATION



SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATIONSeal No. 7

Size 21 mm square

Black ink seal of the KASHAG, the four man Cabinet of the Dalai Lama. The seal dates from the inception of the Kashag in 1728 during the early stages of the Chinese overlordship under Emperor Yung Ch'eng. The central column contains the Tibetan words "bde skyid" ("happiness and contentment") in Horyig script. This square seal was used as the inner seal on documents. Tibetans called it "Officialdom yellow and grey" (yellow hats of the clergy and the laymen's grey clothes)

Seal No. 8

Size 18 mm square

Red ink seal of the KALON LAMA, the monk member of the Kashag. The central column reads "Bdelegs", "wellbeing", the outer columns being decorative.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATIONSeal No. 1110

Size 19mm square

Seal of TSARONG SHAPE

Description. Black ink seal with a central vertical row of Horyig characters reading "Spyi dza", conveying the meaning of "superiority," "chief among others."

The seal is in the possession of Tsarong's grandson from whose papers this impression comes.

Shape was the title of the four men forming the Kashag, the Dalai Lama's cabinet.

(Courtesy Geoffrey Flack)

Seal No. 1

**Trekhang Seal? Member of the Trade Mission? Shakabpa's younger brother? (Information from Shakabpa's grandson.**

Red



actual size



at 200%

Seal of TREKHANG SHAPE

Diameter 19mm

Description. A red ink seal depicting crossed thunderbolts. The seal has been enlarged and enhanced to show detail more clearly.

The seal was provided by Shakabpa's grandson who apparently was unsure of the exact position of Trekhang. His suggestions are incorrect. The Trekhang family was one of the old aristocratic families who traditionally provided a member to train as a monk official for the Government service. This seal belonged to Trekhang who served as a Monk Shape during the 1930s. He opposed the policies of the Reting Regent who forced him to resign in 1939. Trekhang was an uncle of Tsipön Shakabpa.



SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMA'S ADMINISTRATIONSeal No. 1417

Size 12 mm diameter

Black wax seal of the KASHAG. This was used as the outer seal on letters. The central circle contains two characters in Chinese, apparently indicative of the influence of the Ch'ing dynasty in the establishment of the Kashag.

SEALS OF THE DALAI LAMAS ADMINISTRATIONSeal No. 12

Size 21mm square

SEAL OF THE TSONGDU ( The National Assembly)

Description. Black ink seal with two lines of Horyig script reading (l)"rGyal" and (r)"zer sa", i.e. The place of victorious speech.

Seal No. 13

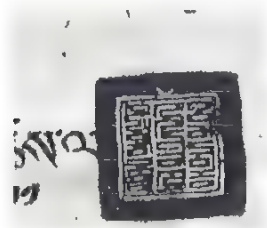
Size 14mm x 14mm

Black ink seal of Assembly Member Do-phing Dorje shows his initials in Tibetan script, "D Ph D."

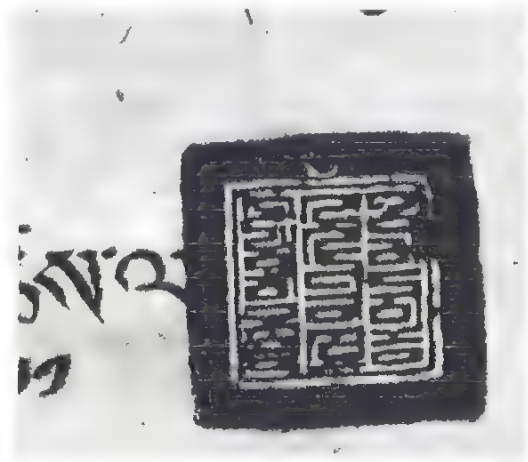
N.B. Both these seals share a common border design and this may be indicative of seals belonging to members of the Tsongdu .

# Grand Secretary

Black



actual size



at 200%

Size 19 mm square

Description. This black ink seal was used as the signature on documents emanating from the Grand Secretary's office. It is made up of three vertical columns of Horyig script. These are analysed below:-

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman												
		<table> <tr> <td>Yig</td><td>la</td><td>tha</td></tr> <tr> <td>thang</td><td>dsin</td><td>-m</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>kha</td><td>dg</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td>-r</td></tr> </table>	Yig	la	tha	thang	dsin	-m		kha	dg			-r
Yig	la	tha												
thang	dsin	-m												
	kha	dg												
		-r												

"Yig thang la dsin kha tham dgar" translates as "The seal of the Secretary, keeper of the writing and the speech."

**Round Black Seal of the  
Grand Secretary**

**Black**



actual size



at 200%

Diameter 15mm

Description. The black ink circular seal was used as an outer seal on letters etc. A central anti- clockwise swastika is enclosed within two concentric circles which are surrounded by a continuous tendril design and an outer circle.

The four Grand Secretaries were known collectively as the Kadung, or Ecclesiastical Court (also known as the Yig tsang, or Nest of letters). This was subordinate to the Kashag. Among other things the Kadung was responsible for the selection of young novice monks from among the leading Lhasa monasteries for training as Tse-trung as the priestly branch of the Administration was known. They were trained at the Tse Lap-tra or Peak School in the Potala. The 175 strong Tse-trung provided the corps of Monk Dzong-pons, etc. Their lay counterparts, the 175 Trung-khor, were selected from the Yutog School where the sons of the aristocracy and leading families were taught. The Grand Secretaries were themselves chosen from the Trung-khor.

SEAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF TIBET



SEAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER (SILÖN) OF TIBET

Seal No. 15

Size 53 mm square

Description. Red ink seal used on official correspondence. The Prime Minister was the only layman authorised to use a red seal in his official capacity. Red was otherwise the prerogative of the clergy. This seal is in the usual Horyig script and was used as the Inmost Seal.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
		1 rgyal dbang mekhog 2 gi bkai lung gis 3 ngo mtshar kun khyeb 4 chhos ldan rgyal po'i 5 chhat srid 'phrin las 6 kyid dge mtshan 'bar 7 pa'i bde skyid 'phel

Translation of the seal:-

" By the supreme order of the Most Excellent King, Protector of the perfect religion, who has authority to carry the affairs of government for the happiness and welfare of all. "

SEAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF TIBET

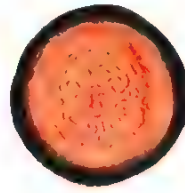
Alternative version of the seal on  
the preceding page.

Seal No. 16 /



Size 48 mm sq.

This smaller seal differs from the preceding seal only in the addition of an inserted symbol at the foot of each column to balance the layout. The text remains the same.

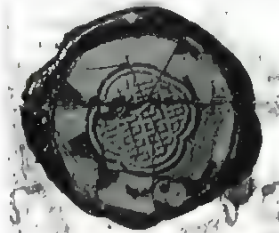
SEAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF TIBETSeal No. 17

Diameter 21mm

Description. Red wax seal usually found as an outer seal on official correspondence. The Prime Minister was the only layman authorised to use a red seal in his official capacity. On private correspondence he used a black seal. The design shows a rounded clockwise swastika surrounded by a four-fold floral design.



A copy of the seal as found on a scarf cover of the 1920s period

SEAL OF THE XIII DALAI LAMA

Diameter 22 mm.

This is the same small seal often found as a red ink seal. The XIII Dalai Lama used it on occasion as a wax outer seal.

SEALS OF THE TIBETAN REGENTS

THE GREAT OFFICIAL SILVER SEAL OF THE  
TIBETAN REGENTS

Seal No. J8



Size 80 mm square

Description. Red ink Inmost Seal used on important documents. The seal was a gift from the Chinese Emperor Ch'ien Lung in 1759 to the first of the elected Tibetan Regents, the Demo Rinpoche Trulku Ngawang Jampel Delek of Tenggyeling who was Regent from 1757-1777 on the death of the VII Dalai Lama.

In the centre are five rows of Tibetan script, to the left two rows of Manchu script and to the right two rows in the Mongolian.

The Tibetan characters read:-

"Bod kyi las don  
khur 'dzin zhwa ser  
bstan pa 'dzin byed  
dpal ldan no min  
han kyi tham ka."

This translates as "Seal of the glorious  
No min khan who has responsibility for  
the government of Tibet and for the  
teaching of the Yellow Hats."



SMALL SEAL OF THE REGENTSeal No. 19 21

Diameter 18mm

Description. Red ink seal used as an outer seal by the Regent, late 19th century. The design shows a floral arrangement in the centre surrounded by eight smaller designs, abstract and animal.


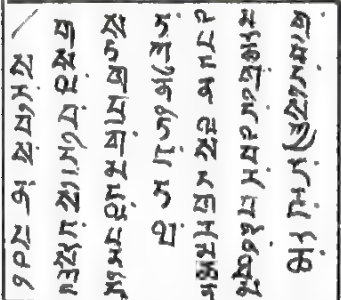
SEAL OF THE REGENT OF TIBET  
THE TAKTRA RINPOCHE, 1941 - 1950

Seal No. 20



Size 53mm square

Description Red ink Inmost Seal used on correspondence of an official character. The seal is inscribed in seven vertical lines of Horyig script.

Horyig							Tibetan							Roman
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
														1. Sar bsi na pa'i 2. gsal ba dri sengshyong 3. slag brag mgal pan-di. 4. ta run ting tal 5. 'pang na las egar mchhen 6. mchhog di 'bar ba'i tham 7. ga bde skyid nga chho

Translation of the seal:-

"The seal of the Most Excellent Taktra Pandita, Exalted Holder of the Highest Office, profound in knowledge, learned in teaching, radiating as the sun the sense of joy and happiness to all."

SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA  
AND HIS COURT

EARLY SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA

Seal No. 21



Size 70 x 65mm

Seal No. 22 24



Size 70 x 70mm

Description. Two early red ink seals of the III Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe ( 1758-80). Inscribed in Lantsa script. The word "Mangalam" ("blessing") is placed either side of a composite supposedly possessed of secret powers. This represents the ten letters o,u,m, h,k,sh,l,w,r, and y and is called the "Nam-chu-wang-dam," i.e. "the ten powerful letters."



## AN EARLY SEAL OF THE PANCHEN LAMA



Seal No. 23

Size 70 x68mm

Description. Red ink seal of the 18th century Panchen Lamas inscribed in the Indian Lantsa script. This variety of the Devanagari alphabet was much used by Buddhists in India and Tibet.

The nine characters appear to be

Phu	rbu	ghu
ru	ka	sha
la	su	ba

The "phurbu" is the ritual dagger used in Lamaist ceremonies; and "kasha" (or "kusha") is a type of grass also used in religious rites. The seal might therefore be translated as

"The Great Teacher who holds the Thunderbolt dagger." (Phurbu Guru)

The Panchen Lama was referred to in Tibet as "Tsang Panchen Rimpocne," "The Precious Learned One of Tsang."

SEAL OF THE PANCHEN LAMASeal No. 24

(hJah-sa bKah-tham, "The  
Seal of heaven and earth")



Size 39 mm square

Description. Red ink seal usually seen used as the Inmost Seal on documents and letters. The seal's design shows a central monogram in Lhantsa script resting on a lotus cushion and crowned by a conch shell. The monogram is a ten letter composite to which the lamas attributed mystical powers. At each side is the word "mangalam", the Sanskrit form of the Tibetan "bKrasnis", i.e. "blessing", as in bKrasnis lhun po (Tasni lnünpo), the name of the Panchen Lama's monastery near Shigatse.

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SMALL SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA  
AND HIS COURT



Seal No. 25

Diameter 19 mm

Red ink seal used by the Panchen Lama. Example known from the 6th Panchen Lama Chökyi Nyima (1883-1937)



Seal No. 26

Diameter 17 mm

Red ink seal seen used on correspondence of the 4th Panchen Lama Tempe Nyima (1781-1854). Used as an outer seal in red ink.



Seal No. 27

Diameter 17 mm

Red ink seal used by the Treasurer of the Panchen Lama.



Seal No. 28

Diameter 18 mm

Red ink seal of the Secretary of the Panchen Lama. This shows use of Chinese characters instead of the Conch shell of the other seals.

SMALL SEALS OF THE PANCHEN LAMA  
AND HIS COURT.



The Panchen Lama's small red ink seal (No. 27) seen used on one of his crested envelopes.



SEALS OF THE SAKYA LAMA



Size 55 mm x 55mm

Description. Red ink seal used as the Inmost seal on official documents.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman																		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>ས</td><td>ང</td><td>ལ</td></tr> <tr> <td>མ</td><td></td><td>ཀ</td></tr> <tr> <td>པ</td><td>ཏ</td><td>/</td></tr> </table>	ས	ང	ལ	མ		ཀ	པ	ཏ	/	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Sa</td><td>dbang</td><td>las</td></tr> <tr> <td>Sakya</td><td></td><td>ka</td></tr> <tr> <td>pa</td><td>gyi</td><td>/</td></tr> </table>	Sa	dbang	las	Sakya		ka	pa	gyi	/
ས	ང	ལ																		
མ		ཀ																		
པ	ཏ	/																		
Sa	dbang	las																		
Sakya		ka																		
pa	gyi	/																		

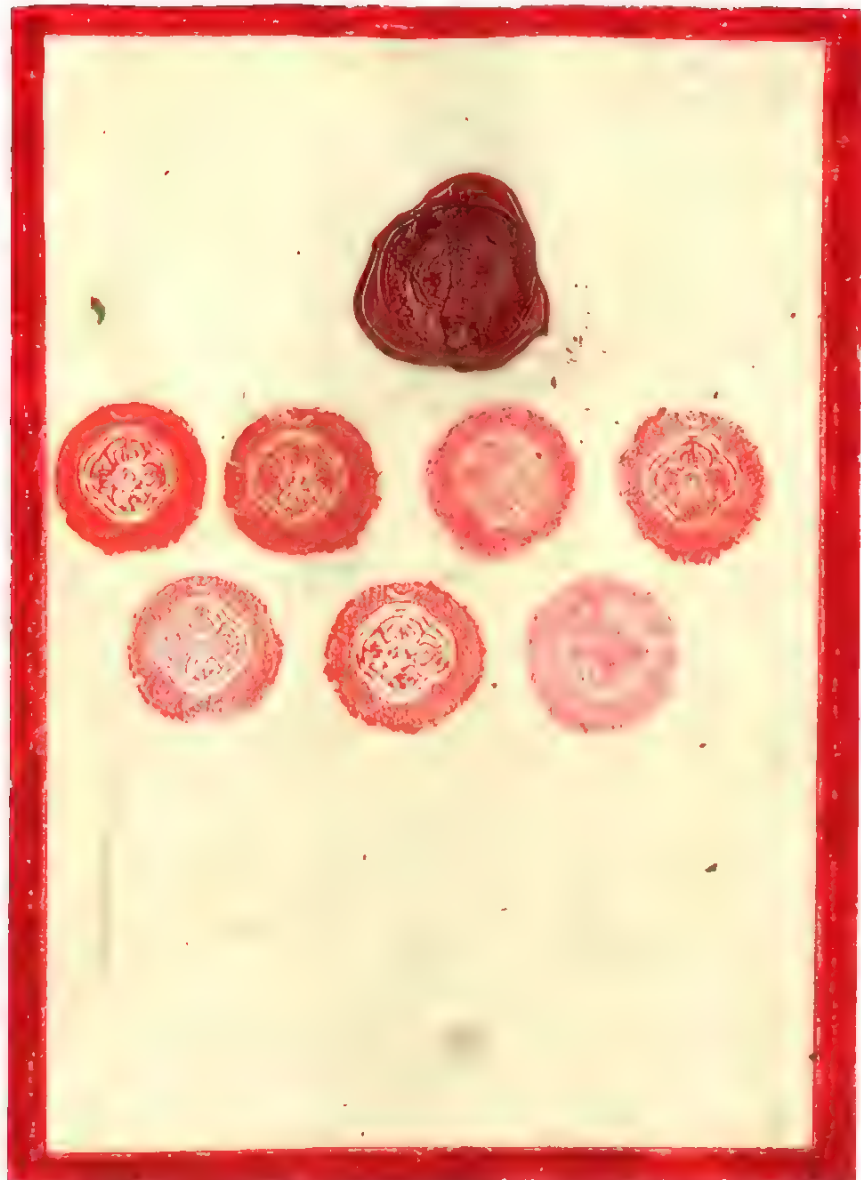
Translation:-

"The seal of the operation of the 'Sakyapa's power."

**TIBET: CLOTH BACKED MONASTRY  
LETTER BEARING  
THE SEALS OF THE SAKYA LAMA**

A Fine Condition Rare Cloth backed "Shirt Letter" bearing the Large Red Ink Seal of the Sakya Lama (Type E-3) as well as his smaller Ring Seal. The Sakya Monastery is situated forty miles to the East of Shigatse, north of Mount Everest. Once the head-quarters of the all powerful Sakyapa ... its library was famous throughout Tibet. The Abbot was an Incarnate Lama and entitled to use a Red Ink Seal. Red Ink Seals are Rare ... and their use was very limited. They could only be used by the Dalai Lama, Tashi Lama, Incarnate Lamas, the Prime Minister and the Regent (in the case of the latter two ... Red Ink Seals could only be used during their tenure of Office." These Ink seals are rarely found on envelopes ... usually on the letters themselves and very few have survived. Most "Shirt Letters" are not backed with material ... only very important letters or letters sent to the Highest Officials are known with this cloth backing. The important Monasteries, such as the Sakya Monastery, had their own couriers and generally did not use the Chinese I-Chan System or the Tibetan Postal System. Monastic mail ... though carried by private couriers ... is an important part of the Postal History of Tibet. (Courtesy Geoffrey Flack





Impressions in Wax (top) and red ink (below) taken from a brass monastic seal acquired in Shigatse on 10th May 1983. The crossed Dorje design is strikingly similar to that of the small Sakya seal on the opposite page, and the seal might well be from the Sakya monastery following the Chinese ravages during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

MONASTIC SEALS



## MONASTIC SEALS

The three large monasteries in the Lhasa area, Drepung, Sera and Ganden, the Three Seats, were referred to collectively as the Dāh-Se-Gah-ni. Impressions of their seals are rarely seen and are usually so poorly struck as to be largely illegible. The illustrations below have been reconstructed from a few examples noted from time to time. They are, therefore "best attempts" and may indicate broadly what the seals were like.



Seal No 34

Diameter 16mm DREPUNG

Description. Red ink seal. Top and bottom are the Tibetan characters for 'Bras and spung ('Bras spung being the Tibetan spelling of Drepung). This is repeated in Horyig left and right. The centre is a floral design.



Seal No. 35 35

Diameter 18mm SERA

Description. Red ink seal. At the top are the Tibetan characters འཇམ་མེད་ (Se ra), on the left རྩ་ (Gya), at the bottom མཉམས་ (chhen) and at the right ཐཱ་ (Tha). These translate as 'The Great Seal of Sera', ('The Rose Fence').



Seal No. 35 36

Diameter 19mm GANDEN

Description. Red ink seal. At the top are the Tibetan characters འཇམ་མེད་ (dGah) and at the bottom ལྷོ་ (blo). These are obviously abbreviations, 'dGah' being the first syllable of dGah-ldan, GANDEN, and 'blo' giving the meaning of INTELLECT.

MONASTIC SEALSSeal No. 36

Diameter 20 mm

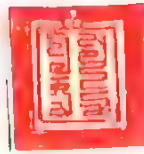
SERA MONASTERY, LHASA, SMAD COLLEGE

Description. Red ink seal showing the Tibetan characters འཛམ་གཤིས་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ "A-tsa bla-brang lo-thang" i.e. "A-tsa Residence Revenue Office". There were three colleges at Sera, Sera Me (Smad), Sera Je and Sera Ngag-pa. Sera Me taught novices and was the oldest foundation dating from 1419.

SERA MONASTERY, LHASA: Founded 1419



30 38  
MONASTIC SEALS



Seal No. 37 38

Size 17mm square

SEAL OF THE ABBOT OF PALKOR CHOIDE  
MONASTERY IN GYANTSE.

Description. Red ink seal of the Abbot in Horyig characters, the left hand vertical column reading "dPal chhos" and the right "spyi dam". These are apparently abbreviations, the first standing for "Palkhor Choide" and the second for "spyi khyab" (Chikyab) "dam kha", i.e. "The seal of the Supreme Head (Abbot) of the monastery of Palkhor Choide."



Seal No. 38 39

Diameter 20mm

SEAL OF ZHAB KHANG SO NAM OF PALRI  
MONASTIC ESTATE IN PENAM.

Description. Black ink seal of this Monastic Official used as witness to signatures on a legal document.



Seal No. 39 40

Diameter 9mm

SEAL OF GE-LA SI OF ZAR MONASTERY

Description. This tiny black ink seal was used to witness a legal document.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS : THE DZONGSSeal No. 41

Size 20mm square

SEAL OF THE PHARI DZONGPÖN

Description. Black ink seal with three lines of Horyig script, (l) reading "Phag", (cent.) "ri" and (r) "rDzong". Several ornamental characters throughout balance the seal. The seal reads "Phari Dzong."

Seal No. 42

Size 26mm square

SEAL OF LHUNTZE DZONG

Description. Seal seen in both black and red inks. Three lines of Tibetan script read  
 "Lhun rtse  
 bSa grub  
 Pho brang"

This is the abbreviated form of "Lhun rtse bSa grub gling Pho brang", "The Palace of Lhuntse, accomplishment of one's purpose."



ADMINISTRATIVE SEALS : THE DZONGSSeal No. 43 43

Size 34mm square

SEAL OF THE MONK DZONGPÖN OF LHÜNTZE DZONGDescription. Red ink seal with the Horyig character 'ta' used decoratively.

Lhüntze Dzong was a massive hilltop fort and administrative centre in Takpo province commanding the approach from India some 60 miles north of the Kameng Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency. Here the XIV Dalai Lama halted briefly on his flight from the Chinese Communists in 1959. During his stay he set up the Provisional Tibetan Government in Exile. The Dzong has since been destroyed by the Chinese.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALSSeal No. 44

Size 18mm

SEAL OF THE TIBETAN TRADE AGENT, GYANTSE

Description. Black ink seal inscribed in Three vertical columns of Horyig script. (l) 'Phum, (central) 'tshogs, (r) 'bde skyid. This translates as 'Heaven's contentment.'

Seal No. 45

Size 11mm

SEAL OF THE FINANCE MINISTER, TSIPON SHAKABPA

Description. This small black ink seal has a design in three vertical columns in which the outer columns depict tendrils with mock Horyig in the centre. Seen on a note from Shakabpa dated December 1947.

Size 14mm diameter. Seal No. 46A FURTHER SEAL OF TSIPON SHAKABPA

Description. This small ink seal appears on a letter from Shakabpa dated June 1959 when he was living in exile in Kalimpong. It is struck in a dark brown ink. The central character seems to be the Horyig "ra". The seal is probably a private one. The letter was addressed to the Commander of the Chu-shi Gang-druk- "Four Rivers Six Ranges"- the Khamba guerilla force fighting the Chinese invaders in Tibet after the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, and was probably taken by special messenger.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEALSSeal No. 47

Size 18mm square

Description. SEAL of the TAX OFFICIALS OF NYANANG, also known as Kuti or Nielamu, the Tibetan border town in which the Nepalese enjoyed extra-territorial rights. Inscribed in a pseudo-Horyig script this black wax seal has been seen on a letter to the Maharaja of Nepal as an outer seal.



The actual seals showing the finely chased workmanship.

SEALS OF THE DZASA DEPON SONAM LADEN LA



Seal No 48  
Size 22 mm square



Seal No 49  
Size 12mm

Description. These two black ink seals belonged to the Dzasa Depon (General) Sonam Laden La, who was appointed by the XIII Dalai Lama to organise a Police Department in Lhasa following the Chinese withdrawal from Tibet in 1912. Laden La was given the rank of Depon and became Superintendent of Police. Both seals are inscribed in Horyig. Seal no. 48 has three vertical columns reading (i) "legs", (ii) "tshogs kun", (iii) "ldan rgyal". This may be translated as "The Victorious Presence, many joys". The smaller seal, no. 49 has the one word "legs". This may mean "Joys" or it could be an abbreviation of Laden La which in Tibetan is spelt "Legs-ldan lags".

(Photograph and impressions by courtesy of Nicholas Rhodes).

POSTAL SEALS



POSTAL SEALSSeal No. 48 50

Diameter 23mm

PHARI POST OFFICE

Description. Black ink seal used very rarely to cancel mail when the regular canceller had been mislaid or was not available. The central square contains the characters ཕ་ལྷ་, "Phag," the first syllable of "Phag-ri."

Seal No. 49 51

Diameter 22mm

GYANTSE POST OFFICE

Description. Usage as above. The central square contains the characters ཏཱ་ལྷ་, the first syllable of ཏཱ་ལྷ་ཅུ་, Gyantse.

Seal No. 50 52

Diameter 19mm

PENAM POST OFFICE

Description. Usage as above. The smallest of the four. The central square contains the character པ་, the first syllable of པ་རྒྱལ་, Pa rNam.

POSTAL SEALS

Seal No. 51

Size 22mm

SHIGATSE POST OFFICE

Description. A black ink seal with the same rare usage as the other postal seals. It differs from the other seals in that it bears a complete inscription instead of the abbreviated identification common to the others. The two lines of Tibetan script read "gShi-sa-rTse / yig kad," i.e. "Shigatse Letter Post."



Seal No. 4

Size 22mm

LHASA POST and TELEGRAPH OFFICE

Description. This black ink seal has only recently come to light. It shows in the centre the Tibetan characters for "LHA", the first syllable of Lhasa. The only known usage is on a Telegram form as a receiving mark. This was sent from Gyantse to General Dzasa Laden La in Lhasa in 1923/4.

BANKNOTE SEALS

46 47

BANKNOTE SEALS

All Tibetan banknotes bore two seals.  
The red ink seals shown below were  
impressed on the left side of the note  
by the monk official of the issuing  
authority. These Tse-cha seals are shown  
below.



Seal No. 52

Diameter 17mm

Description. This Tse-cha seal showing  
a four-fold scroll pattern appears on the  
first issue of banknotes in 1890 denominated  
in trangkas.



Seal No. 53

Size 11mm

Description. This seal is seen on the lower  
value notes of the 1892 issue denominated in  
srang. The pattern is irregular and without  
meaning.



Seal No. 54

Diameter 11mm

Description. A circular seal again showing  
a meaningless and crowded mass of symbols.  
Used on notes of 25 srang and above.

47 50  
BANKNOTE SEALS

The following black seals are found on the right side of banknotes. These are the La-cha seals of the lay official of the Treasury.



Seal No. 55



Seal No. 56

Type 1 Size 25x19mm

Type 2 Size 16x14mm

Type 1 is seen on the highest value note of the 1890 issue (50 trangkas or 7½ srang); Type 2 on the 1892 notes of 5 and 10 Srang. The two lines of Horyig script run vertically and are identical on both seals.

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">x</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ག</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">འ</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">g</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">d</span> </div>
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཁ</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ལ</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">Zhu</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">Ngul</span> </div>
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཁ</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ལ</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ng</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">Kha</span> </div>
		<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ng</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ng</span> </div>

Translation: "gZhung dNgul-Khang"  
"Government Treasury"

Type 3 Size 23mm x 19mm

This seal also has two vertical lines of Horyig script but the text is different from that in Types 1 and 2. The border is in the design of thunderbolts and characters reminiscent of the stamps of the 1933 issue of Tibet. Seen on the higher value notes of the 1892 issue.

Seal No. 57

Horyig	Tibetan	Roman
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">x</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཤ</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཞ</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">S</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">d</span> </div>
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཞ</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཞ</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">rid</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">pal</span> </div>
	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཞ</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">ཞ</span> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">zhi</span> <span style="margin-right: 10px;">bar</span> </div>

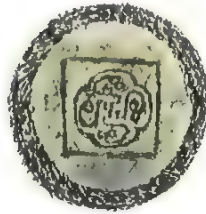


Translation: "Srid-zhi dPal-'bar"  
"Tranquil Government,  
Glorious radiance."

This was the official designation of the Kashag.



SEALS OF THE NOBILITY

SEALS OF THE NOBILITYThe Taring FamilySeal No. 58 61

Size 15mm sq.

Description. Black wax square seal of the Taring's Dopta Estate near Shigatse. The design shows a central swastika springing from a four-fold tendril motif.

Seal No. 59 6

Size 10 mm long

Description. A tiny oval shaped black wax seal of the Taring's Gyantse Estate. The tombstone design contains a pattern of bars.

SEALS OF THE NOBILITYThe Tsharong FamilySeal No. 60 63

Size 33mm

Description. Black wax personal seal of Tsharong Shape. Oval with a design of swastika and thunderbolts. At the top are the Tibetan characters ལྷ་འདྲེན་ཤག་ i.e. "Lha-ldan Tsharong Shag" and at the bottom in English "Tsharong Lhasa."

Seal No. 61 64

Diameter 15mm

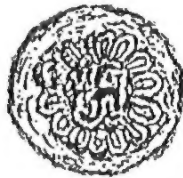
Description. Black wax seal of the Agent of Tsharong's Phari Estate. A central vertical column bears the Tibetan characters ལྷ་འདྲེན་ i.e. "Nor-la" with a design either side.

Seal No. 62 64

Diameter 15mm

Description. Black wax seal of the Steward of Tsharong's Shigatse Estate. Showing a central oblong containing symbolic characters flanked on either side by a design of bars.

MISCELLANEOUS SEALS

MISCELLANEOUS SEALS

Size 25mm

Seal No. 63 66SEAL OF THE KING OF MUSTANG (LO)

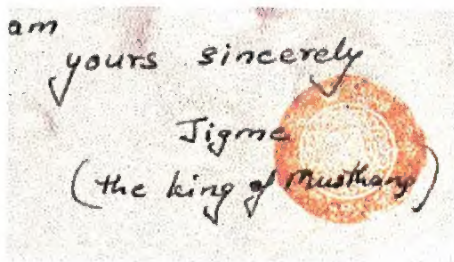
Description. Black wax seal the design being a lotus cushion in the centre of which are the Tibetan characters ཡི ལོ རྒ ལ འ རྒ ལ འ  
"YigLo rGyal", i.e. "The King of Lo"  
Mustang is an ancient Tibetan kingdom now within the borders of Nepal and the only former Nepali territory to maintain a semi-autonomous status.

( circa 18th- 19th centuries)

Seal No. 64 67

**King of Mustang**  
(on 1972 letter)

Red





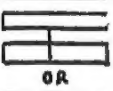







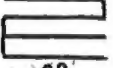



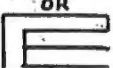




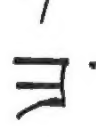


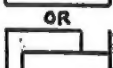
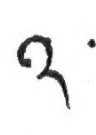



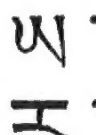


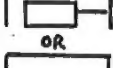
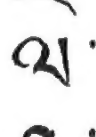







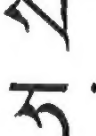
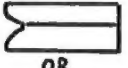

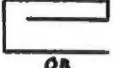
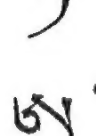
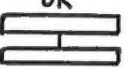

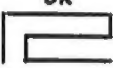




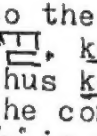


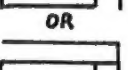





actual size



at 200%

Seal of King Jigme Dorje Tandrul . The enlargement has been enhanced to show the design.

THE HORYIG AND TIBETAN CHARACTERS AS FOUND ON  
SOME IMPORTANT SEALS, AND THEIR ROMAN FORMS .

HORYIG	TIBETAN	ROMAN	HORYIG	TIBETAN	ROMAN
		ka	 OR		tsha
		kha	 OR		dsa
		ga	 OR		wa
		nga	 OR		zha
		cha	 OR		za
		chha	 OR		ha
		ja	 OR		ya
		nya	 OR		ra
		ta	 OR		la
 OR		tha	 OR		sha
		da	 OR		sa
 OR		na	 OR		ha
		pa	 OR		a
		pha			
		ba			
		ma			
 OR		tsa			

## NOTE

Horyig vowel signs are usually affixed to the lower right corner of the consonant, thus ki ཀི, ke ཀེ, ku ཀུ; exceptionally "o" is subjoined, thus ko ཀོ. Tibetan vowels are usually placed over the consonant thus ki ཀེ, ke ཀེ, ko ཀོ; exceptionally "u" is placed below, thus ku ཀུ.



## INDEX

Altan Khan	2	Mangalam	28
Banknotes	49, 50	Mustang - see Lo	
Ch'ien Lung Emperor	22	Nam-chu Wang-dam	26
Ch'ing Dynasty	iii, 13	National Assembly - see Tsongdu	
Dah-Se- Gah-ni	36	Palkhor Choide	38
Dalai Lama V	7	Panchen Lama - III	26
XI	iii	IV	29
XIII	2, 5, 7, 8	VI	29
XIV	2, 5, 6, 41	Penam	38
Demo Rimpoche	22	Phari	40, 46, 53
Dophing Dorje	14	Phurbu Guru	27
Dopta Estate	52	Potala	16
Drepung	36	Prime Minister	18, 19, 20
Ganden	36	Regent	22, 23, 24
Gela si of Zar	38	Sakya Lama	32, 33, 34
Gnyanang (Nyanang)	43	Sanggye Gyatso	7
Golden King	2	Sera	36, 37
Grand Secretary	15, 16	Shakabpa	12, 42
Gyantse	38, 40, 46, 52	Snigatse	28, 47, 52, 53
Hsien Feng Emperor	iii	Silom - see Prime Minister	
Jah-sa Kah-tham	28	Sonam Gyatso	2
Jigme Dorje Tandrul	55	Taktra Rimpoche	24
King of Mustang		Taring	52
Kadung	16	Tashilhunpo	28
Kalon Lama	10	Trekhang Rimpoche	12
Karmapa	ii	Trung-khor	16
Kashag	10, 11, 13, 16, 50	Tsarong	11, 53
La cha	50	Tse cha	49
Laden la	44	Tse Lap-tra	16
Lantsa	26, 27	Tse trung	16
Lhasa	47	Tsongdu	14
Lhuntze Dzong	40, 41	Yig tsang	16
Lo	55	Yung Ch'eng Emperor	10
		Yutog	16
		Zar	38
		Zhab Khang Sonam of Palri.	38